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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, August 11, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TOMATOES". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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We had tomatoes for supper last night--tomatoes cut in half and broiled to a light brown--seasoned with salt, pepper, and a little melted butter. Night before last we had tomato salad. And I believe it was the day before that that we had tomato juice for breakfast.

That may give you something of a rough idea of how popular tomatoes are at our house. We like them the year round, of course. But it's in the summertime--especially--along in August--that we treat ourselves to a lot of sun-ripened, ripe red tomatoes. And it's during August and September, when supplies of homegrown tomatoes are coming in, that we put them up to use later on.

I don't know whether or not tomato dishes appear on your menus as often as they do on ours. But judging from the numbers produced each year most everyone in the country must like them. Today tomatoes are one of the most important of all the vegetables. In fact, in money value, tomatoes produced commercially rank just below potatoes and sweetpotatoes.

You might not think it today--but less than a century ago the tomato was a sort of Cinderella among the vegetables. We had started to eat them here in the United States. But there were still a lot of people who regarded tomatoes suspiciously. They thought they were some kind of "poisonous love apples"--good to look at but dangerous to eat.

However, it wasn't long until the matchless flavor of the tomato overcame all such mistaken notions. The plant breeders improved varieties. More and more



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tomatoes were grown both commercially and in home gardens. And some 16 years ago-- nutrition workers found the tomato to be an excellent source of vitamin C--one of the vitamins needed in the diet every day.

But let me read you what the Federal Bureau of Home Economics has to say about the food value of tomatoes.

"Nutritionally--the tomato almost runs the gamut of the vitamin alphabet. It is an inexpensive source of vitamin C--and an important source of vitamin A."

Or--to get right down to cases

"One medium-sized ripe, red tomato will furnish about half the day's requirement for ascorbic acid or vitamin C. And it also has about one-fifth of the day's needs for vitamin A. Other vitamins present and accounted for in lesser amounts are --vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, vitamin G, and the pellagra-preventive vitamin."

And while we're on the subject of vitamins here's a bit of information that may reassure you--if you can tomatoes at home.

"Results of an experiment completed recently in the laboratories of the Bureau of Home Economics show that tomatoes put up at home by recommended methods may lose some of their vitamin C in storage after canning. But they are still a good source of that vitamin. The natural acidity of tomatoes protects the vitamin in the canning process."

And now, maybe you'd like to check with the recommended methods for canning tomatoes at home. Here is the story briefly.

"Tomatoes are easier to can at home than most vegetables because--unlike most vegetables--they are acid foods. For that reason you needn't process them in a steam pressure canner. Instead, process them in a water bath for a reasonable length of time and you'll be sure of killing any dangerous or trouble-making bacteria that happen to be present.

"Ideal tomatoes for canning are medium in size--free from decay--ripe and firm. You may pack them either hot or cold--in glass jars or tin cans. If you put



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them up "hot-pack" naturally you'll be able to cut down on the processing time in the water bath."

But whichever way you pack them--hot or cold--you'll need to skin the tomatoes first. And here's the easiest way I know of to do that.

"Put the tomatoes in a tray or wire basket. Dip this in boiling water for about a minute. Then plunge it into cold water. Drain the tomatoes--peel them--and core them immediately.

"If you want to pack them raw--put them whole into the containers--packing as closely as you can. Add 1 teaspoon salt for every quart of tomatoes. Fill the jar or can with tomato juice. Then finish by the processing in a water bath.

"If you want to pack the tomatoes hot--cut the peeled and cored tomatoes into quarters. Heat them to boiling and pack into the cans or jars immediately. Use the same amount of salt--1 teaspoon for every quart of tomatoes. And process in the water bath."

And now just a word of warning in case you ever forgetfully use a galvanized utensil for canning. No foods should ever be cooked in galvanized-iron utensils. But with acid foods like tomatoes you have to be more careful than that. Don't allow cut tomatoes even to stand around in galvanized-iron utensils. They'll take up zinc from the pan and become poisonous."

If you put up part of your tomatoes as juice it's a good idea to work with only a gallon or so at a time and to work quickly to keep the natural tomato color and flavor in the juice. And for the same reason use knives of stainless steel--avoid kettles of copper, brass, or iron.

And that's all the tomato talk I have for now except just one bit of information that I came across the other day. It seems that the tomato has actually been up before the highest court of the United States--back in 1893. And on that occasion the Supreme Court handed down a decision in connection with a tariff problem that tomatoes are vegetables in the language of common usage. Botanically, of course, the tomato is a fruit.

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